

Dragonshards

What Do You Know

By Keith Baker



You're walking down the street when you encounter a dwarf wearing eight copper rings, one on each finger. You've read the **Eberron Campaign Setting**, and you immediately think, "Hey, I'll bet that guy is a member of the Aurum!"

Unfortunately, your *character* hasn't read the campaign setting book. Just because a man is wearing eight rings doesn't mean he's a member of the Aurum. There's the question of the style of the rings, the manner in which he folds his hands when he greets you. Is your character capable of reading these signs? This is the role of the Knowledge skill -- to determine the things that your character knows, regardless of whether you know it. Sometimes it can be difficult to determine where a particular fact falls.

Ultimately, the use of Knowledge skills is in the hands of the DM. You may have no problem assigning a skill and difficulty to a particular Knowledge check. If you find yourself at a loss, here are a few pointers to set you on the right path.

Geography

Chapter Seven of the **Eberron Campaign Setting** includes details on a variety of important cities and sites. Has your character ever heard of the Torlaac Moor or the Black Pit? For the most part, this falls under -- shocking as this may be -- Knowledge (geography).

Knowledge DC Information about...

5	National capital or metropolis (Sharn)
10	City, major fortress, or environmental feature (The King's Forest, Sterngate)
15	Village or town, smaller fortress or feature (Black Pit, Argonth)
20	Hamlet or thorp, obscure fortress or feature (Ringbriar, The Dragon's Crown)

A successful skill check means that you can point to the location on the map and that you know basic details about it: primary industries, size, most common race among the population, form of law. More detailed information may require a higher difficulty check, as described later in this article -- or it might require Knowledge (local).

History

With Knowledge (geography) serving your geographical needs, it should come as no surprise that Knowledge (history) is the source for information about the past.

Knowledge DC Information about...

5	The last five years
10	The Current Age
15	The Age of Monsters
20	The Age of Giants
25	The Age of Demons
30	The Age of Dragons

At the DM's discretion, a character could pick a specific era (other than the Current Age) as a specialty. The DC for checks relating to the chosen era should begin at 5, but checks concerning other eras should be bumped up by 5. For example, a scholar who specializes in the Age of Monsters needs only a DC 5 check to remember a major event, but it's a DC 10 check for him to recall a major event of the last 5 years. Needless to say, there is very little information available about the Age of Dragons or the Age of Demons; even a specialized scholar won't be able to come up with much of value.

Knowledge (history) also is useful for recognizing relics of a particular era. If the DM allows a character to specialize in an era and the character has at least 5 ranks in Knowledge (history), he can choose to forego the usual bonus to Bardic Knowledge and instead gain a +2 synergy bonus to Appraise, Forgery, and Decipher Languages checks specifically related to the specialty age.

Religion

Can you recognize the symbol of the Emerald Claw? Do you know anything about the Cults of the Dragon Below? Knowledge (religion) is the relevant skill, but each religion has its own difficulty.

Knowledge DC Information about...

10	The Church of the Silver Flame, the Sovereign Host
15	The Blood of Vol, the Dark Six
20	The Cults of the Dragon Below, the Path of Light, the Undying Court, the Druidic sects

A character always makes checks about his own religion at a base DC of 5. In addition, a DM could choose to provide a character with a +5 bonus if his region of origin is closely linked to a particular region; someone who grew up in the Eldeen Reaches should know something about the druids even if he doesn't share their beliefs.

Organizations

The **Eberron Campaign Setting** provides details on 28 organizations. How much of that information should be available to a player character? What skill should be used to acquire that information?

This is not an easy question to answer. House Jorasco is a household name, and it hides few secrets. The Dreaming Dark is virtually unknown outside of the kalashtar and the Inspired, and it could be difficult to prove that the organization even exists. Between these is a wide range of groups with multiple levels of secrecy. Most people have heard of House Phiarlan, but far fewer know that it trades in information or how to properly contact a

Phiarlan intelligence broker. Many members of the upper crust know about the existence of the four concords of the Aurum but the existence of the Shadow Cabinet is a secret even to members of the concords. Consider the following when determining base difficulty.

Knowledge DC Level of Secrecy...

5	Character is a member of the organization
10	None (most Dragonmark houses, Morgrave University)
15	Low (The Aurum, the Order of the Emerald Claw)
20	Medium (The Chamber, the Shadow Cabinet)
30	High (The Dreaming Dark, the Lords of Dust)

In this case, even choosing the appropriate skill can be difficult. Knowledge (nobility) is the default skill for obtaining information about the dragonmark houses, and it also makes sense for the Aurum, the royal families, and other groups that are centered in court. The Lords of Dust would typically fall under Knowledge (arcana) while the Dreaming Dark would come under the heading of Knowledge (psionics). If a character is a conspiracy buff, the DM might allow him to take Knowledge (organizations); 5 ranks in such a skill would provide a +2 synergy bonus to Gather Information checks when seeking information about an organization.

Knowledge (local)

Knowledge (local) is a somewhat mysterious skill. What does it mean to have "local" knowledge about the entire world? The DM can interpret this skill in several different ways, depending on how challenging he wants to make things for a player.

At the broadest, most generous end of the spectrum, Knowledge (local) can be used in any location. This represents an amazing memory for trivia and a general ability to pick up local customs and gossip subconsciously without the need for a Gather Information check.

If the DM wants to sacrifice utility in the name of realism, he can make a character choose a country to associate with the skill -- Knowledge (local/Breland).

As a compromise, the DM could allow a character to choose one country for each rank in the skill. This way, a character with five ranks in Knowledge (local) could be familiar with all of the Five Nations. Whenever she gains a new rank, she can choose a new country. Ideally, it should be a place where she's spent time recently.

Knowledge (local) is more versatile than its counterparts and may overlap with them. Knowledge (nobility) can provide general information about a dragonmark house and its international alliances but Knowledge (local) can tell you about the size of the local enclave, the name of the local baron, and his personal feud with House Kundarak. Likewise, Knowledge (nobility) or Knowledge (geography) can provide you with the name of a nation's king but Knowledge (local) is more likely to tell you about his rumored taste for virgin blood.

The DM needs to decide how to limit local knowledge. A simple, straightforward (but more restrictive) approach is to treat it as an extension of the character's other Knowledge skills. Thus, unless the character has at least one rank in Knowledge (nobility), for example, he can't use Knowledge (local) for checks specifically involving aristocrats.

Modifying Difficulty

The checks described above provide you with the difficulty for acquiring the most basic knowledge about a subject. It's only a DC 5 check to point to Sharn on a map. If you want to know the name of the Captain of the Guard in Lower Dura, that's an entirely different question. The DM should apply the following modifiers, as she sees fit.

DC Modifier Information is...

0	Trivial (the name of a city)
+5	Slightly difficult (the name of the mayor of Sharn)
+10	Challenging (the names of all of the city councilors in Sharn)
+15	Obscure (the names of the councilors' spouses)
+20	Extremely Obscure (the names of the councilor's spouses during the reign of King Jarot)

Identifying the seal of a dragonmark house is a trivial task. Recognizing the dress clothing of a house is slightly difficult, while identifying an incognito heir's house by her facial features, style of speech, and manner of dress would be extremely obscure, if it's even possible.

About the Author

Keith Baker has been an avid fan of **Dungeons & Dragons** since grade school. His life took a dramatic turn in 2002 when he submitted the world of Eberron to the WotC Fantasy Setting Search. In addition to developing the **Eberron** Campaign Setting and *Shadows of the Last War*, he has worked for Atlas Games, Goodman Games, and Green Ronin.

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